DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 133 101 RC 009 559

AUTHOR Photiadis, John; Simoni, Joseph J.
TITLE The Changing Nature of Rural Religious Institutions.
PUB DATE Aug 76
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the World Congress of Rural Sociology (4th, Torun, Poland, August 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitudes; Christianity; *Church Role; *Comparative Analysis; Foreign Countries; Futures (of Society); Identification (Psychological); Interaction Process Analysis; International Studies; *Religion; *Rural Areas; Social Change; *Social Integration; Social Systems; State Church Separation; Values
IDENTIFIERS *Appalachia; *Greece; United States; World Congress of Rural Sociology (4th)

ABSTRACT

The contributions to societal integration of the flexible and diversified religious institution of rural Appalachia in the United States were compared and contrasted with the contributions of the more or less monolithic and state-controlled rural church in Greece. It was found that the process of integration of rural society into the larger social system has been better served in the U.S., particularly in rural Appalachia, than in European countries, especially Greece. Religious pluralism in Appalachia has functioned to alleviate the anxieties of the socially maladjusted whose needs are not met by other established social institutions, and also has displayed the flexibility needed to function as a status maintenance and stabilization vehicle for those who have done well (having achieved social mobility) in society. Thus, in addition to its generally pluralistic nature, and skillfulness in securing membership and participation, the Appalachian rural religious institution has provided more opportunities than the rural Greek church (and probably other European churches) for the alleviation of anxieties produced by modern societal changes. These research findings offer support for surveys which indicate that the U.S. religious institution, as compared to other Christian nations, especially European ones, has been the most successful in this respect. (Author/NQ)

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ED133101

FOURTH WORLD CONGRESS OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY

NINTH EUROPEAN CONGRESS OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY

August 9-13, 1976

Torun, Poland

THEME:

The Integrated Development of Human and Natural Resources:

The Contribution of Rural Sociology

Seminar 20: The Changing Nature Of Rural Religious Institutions.

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THE CHANGING RURAL RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION

John Photiadis & Joseph J. Simoni

West Virginia University

U.S.A.

ABSTRACT

The contributions to societal integration of the flexible and diversified religious institution of rural Appalachia in the United States are compared and contrasted with the contributions of the more or less monolithic and state-controlled rural church in Greece. The analysis indicates that the process of integration of rural society into the larger social system has been better served in the U.S., and rural Appalachia particularly, than in European countries, and especially Greece. Religious pluralism in Appalachia has functioned to alleviate the anxieties of the socially maladjusted whose needs are not met by other established social institutions, and also has displayed the flexibility needed to function as a status maintenance and stabilization vehicle for those who have done well (having achieved social mobility) in society. Thus, in addition to its generally pluralistic nature, and skillfulness in securing membership and participation, the Appalachian rural religious institution has provided more opportunities than the rural Greek church (and probably other European churches) for the alleviation of anxieties produced by modern societal changes. These research findings offer support for surveys (such as those conducted by the Gallop Poll) which indicate that the U.S. religious institution, as compared to other Christian nations, especially European ones, has been the most successful in this respect.

Introduction

Four often-mentioned determinants of religious involvement are "socialization", "accommodation", "cognition", and "deprivation". "Accommodation" usually refers to a process of joining a church because of social pressure or convenience. "Cognition" refers to a process of attraction and attachment to religious doctrines that are supportive of one's value orientations. In other words, one chooses a church, a denomination, or a doctrine because the particular choice makes sense in terms of salient concepts which provide the individual with a workable view of the world. In some societies, reintegration of existing beliefs and practices has taken place in order to adapt them to the problems and conditions of modern life. Typical in this resepct has been the reinterpretation of the doctrines of karma, dharma, moksha, and ahinse in India. As Donald Smith points out (1966), in South Asia, an acceptance of imported Western notions of nationalism, democracy, and socialism has prompted, with relatively little sense of conflict, Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims to reinterpret religious doctrines so as to make them compatible with modern values and ideologies. Finally, "deprivation" refers to "any and all ways that an individual or group may be or may feel disadvantaged in comparison, either to other individuals or groups, or to an internalized set of standards" (Glock and Stark, 1965).

With respect to religion and developing rural societies, another crucial question merits attention at this point. What factors in these societies will promote the kinds of socialization, accommodation, cognition and sense of deprivation which will enable rural religious institutions to play more significant roles in the processes of integration of rural societies into larger

societal social systems? Many theoretical discussions and empirical studies have placed an unduely heavy emphasis on a variety of psychological attributes or tendencies as the major factor or precondition for such transformations (Lerner, 1958; Weber, 1958; Hoselitz, 1960; McClelland, 1961; Hagen, 1962; Boulding, 1963; Warshay, 1964; Inkeles, 1966; Kahl, 1968; Lee, 1968; Myrdal, 1968; Kim, 1971). As Kim (1973) points out, a central flaw of the "psychological" approach lies in its neglect of the importance of structural features and institutional arrangements that either encourage or repress certain sets of attitudinal, cognitive, and motivational orientations of individuals. The contention here is that it is the society's structural characteristics and institutional arrangements that make the difference not only as to whether or not members of the society are encouraged to develop such psychological orientations, but also as to how behavioral tendencies stemming from such orientations can be channeled into actual development processes, i.e., the integration of rural society into the larger societal system through the reorientation of the rural religious institution (Whyte and Williams, 1968).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the integration of rural society into the larger society in two settings with dive se religious institutional structures; more specifically, to examine the contributions to integration of the flexible and diversified religious institution of rural Appalachia in the United States as compared to the more or less monolithic and state-controlled rural church in Greece. This examination and related analysis will underscore a rural transition theory (Photiadis and Schwarzweller, 1971; Photiadis and Ball, 1976; Photiadis, 1976) implying that in order for rural religious institutions to effectively undergo the institutional reorganization that integration into the larger society requires,

they must demonstrate the flexibility needed to satisfy the social and social psychological needs of the differentiating segments of developing rural populations.

Rural Greece

Rural church organization in Greece is part of a national bureaucracy. Ministers, although they are usually subsidized by local communities, are government employees. The lack of separation between church and state has its roots in the years of Turkish occupation of the Balkan states when priests were not only important community leaders, but, like the family, also were entrusted with the perpetuation of national identity. They taught Greek reading and writing, Greek history and national ideals in "secret schools" which were located in crypts under their churches. As Margaret Mead (1952) once pointed out, the Greek Orthodox religion is entirely synonymous with Greekness. When a Greek asks, Is he a Christian?, he means, Is he a Greek? In other words, religious identity means national identity and rural religion, in this sense, is highly integrated into rural life. Schools open with religious ceremonies; the foundation stone of every house is laid with agiasmos; merchants begin new undertakings with the proper religious inauguration.

With respect to changes, the most noticeable changes have occurred in parts of the traditional functions of the church, and in certain respects are indirectly supportive of the major themes of the changing society. For instance, priests, in their sermons now, do not oppose desires for higher income, or even the breaking up of the extended family as long as these changes do not affect the church. Although priests might preach about the evils of wearing miniskirts, the use of lipsticks, and disrespect for the

elderly, changes less directly related to major societal themes, they are either in support of other social changes or openly avoid discussing them as is the case with out-migration which is hurting even the membership of the church. Our field observations indicate that these attitudes of priests are in line with those of villagers who want the priests to talk about the evils of wearing miniskirts, but not about the need to preserve the extended family form which many now see as outdated.

In general, there has occurred a general process of secularization of rural life in Greece. Less religious ritual is in evidence and fewer objects and events exist to emphasize the distinction between the sacred and the profane, a distinction which normally increases conditioning over beliefs.[1] For instance, religion is now involved less in the social activities of the young and middle-aged dealing with family and occupation. Furthermore, the number of people for whom religion provides the main orientation in life, and these are usually known in rural Greek communities, seems to have declined. At least this is what the majority of villagers think. This abandonment of religious ideology on behalf of a secular one has occurred because the church in rural Greece provides no avenues for the fulfillment of new expectations, for example, the acquisition of higher income, higher level of living, and social equality.

Another sign of the secularization process is related to the area of morality. Secular morality has come to replace religious morality. Very rarely do you hear mothers shouting to their children, "Don't do that, God

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[1] Religious beliefs assume the existence of sacred objects and beings, but by repetition, strengthen and reaffirm faith. For a classical discussion of the relationship between belief and ritual see Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, translated by J.W. Swain (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1947).

will burn you!" Interviews with young adults revealed that this expression had been a common occurrence when they were children. Today, God is perceived less than before as responsible for physical, social or other phenomena affecting man's life directly. Man is perceived more than before as determining his own courses in life, and science and technology, even amongst the least educated, are now seen as powerful forces developed by man, linked to his own life, and not alien to his personal existence and well-being. For example, our interviews with Greek farmers indicate that "agricultural magic" is being gradually replaced with new farm technology.[2]

In spite of the changes taking place in long established folkways and norms, the decline in church involvement and increased secularization of the rural Greek's outlook on the world, religion still provides a relatively stable orientation for, by far, the majority of Greeks living in rural areas. Religious beliefs seem to have changed less than religious practices. However, it is usually necessary to condition religious beliefs through some religious ritual. If we consider that now in rural Greece there is less participation in church activities and in everyday rituals, and fewer opportunities for distinguishing between the sacred and the profane, we probably should expect the strengths of beliefs to be declining. But this would be the case only if religion in Greece does not continue adapting to major societal changes, and does not become more than before both an anxiety-relieving mechanism for dealing with the increasing frustrations produced by the complexities of modern society, and a mechanism for recognizing and supporting new statuses achieved by individuals who have been successful in dealing with modern society.

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[2] "Agricultural magic" refers to practices such as witching for water and planting crops by the signs of the moon.

The church in rural Greece has not been able to differentiate as much as other social institutions, and has remained relatively inflexible. Although it has contributed some both directly and indirectly to the integration of the rural with the larger society, this contribution has been limited. A direct contribution has been limited because, although more than in the past, relatively few community development projects have been carried out by the church. The church's indirect contribution has been limited because it did not change enough to attract men who performed well in society and needed recognition of their status, and because its activities have been too impersonal to help alienated people alleviate anxieties. With the exception of certain rituals, e.g. processions, litanies, name-day celebrations in memory of certain saints, religious involvement was and still is primarily impersonal. Personable social interaction within the church setting, even with the priest, is limited. Participation in ritual has included contact primarily with icons, and praying in front of them, the burning of the incense, and of course the mysticism of the Byzantine service. Church services frequently include a frequent exchange between priest and cantor which members of the congregation often do not understand.

The attitudes of the clergy and Greek society generally are the major reasons for the lack of change in the rural church and the limited contribution of the rural religious institution to the societal process of integration. Neither the church nor Greek society as a whole have, through the years, favored church changes, especially not in rural areas. The Greek Orthodox church sees value in retaining the old, and the rural public seems to support this attitude. In rural villages we visited, both young and old indicated the belief that a priest is not a priest if he does not have a beard or does not wear his black cloth, the raso. The priest is still a

functionary whose purpose is to disseminate the word of God, and warn people of the presence of evil. Even now, with all the changes taking place, there is no noticeable effort by priests in rural areas to become engaged in social activities of any sort.

Appalachia

The religious picture in Appalachia today is at best incomplete, the last reliable census being in 1926 (U.S. Census of Religious Bodies). The most recent ecumenical compilation of the church membership in Appalachia by the Commission on Religion in Appalachia (Quinn and Johnson, 1971) is misleading because it excludes Pentecostal, Holiness and other sectarian groups. A report by Weatherford and Brewer (1962:161) of the religious picture in seven southern Appalachian states in 1958-59 indicates a proliferation of "small, struggling, subsidized and substandard churches" served by a predominantly bivocational clergy with limited professional training.

The early Appalachians who moved westward from the coast were of Celtic, more specifically Scotch-Irish origin. They were people of relatively distinct value orientation, and, compared to the rest of American society, they were a relatively homogenous group. The neighborhood and community social organization which developed later in the hollows had its roots in a value orientation that, among other things, emphasized individualism, familism, life in harmony with nature, and above all, religiosity. Religious beliefs offered the foundation and the moral basis on which both the Appalachian value orientation and, in turn, the social organization, which in those days was primarily rural, was built.

What was typical about early Appalachian beliefs was their fundamentalist nature involving emotionalism and the literal, and in some ways dogmatic,

interpretations of the Bible. Thus, as Maurer in his book, Mountain Heritage, suggests, the early Appalachians saw their lives and the lives of others as heavily dependent upon God, and in some ways their relationship with God and others was seen in terms of black and white...

> They saw their world and their lives in a religious framework, and they expressed its meaning in powerful, vivid religious terms--a vocabulary which is almost lost today, and its words seldom heard in most homes. They were powerful, life-shaking, soul-stirring words like sin, evil, hell, lust, lost, hate, wickedness, damnation, judgement, perdition, and wonderful words of eternal promise--love, joy, hope, peace, glory, redemption, conversation, salvation, born again, eternal life, the kingdom, and they filled their hearts with hope and strength. These were the religious tools (concepts) with which they hammered out the meaning on the anvil of life, and they did it with powerful effect on the lives of men (Maurer, 1974: 107).

In the beginning there were Presbyterians, Episcopalians and other formally organized denominations. Such affiliations required an educated clergy and centralized organization, impractical requirements in the wilderness of the frontier. People settled in small isolated areas where trained ministers could neither be provided, nor supported. Therefore, locally autonomous sects grew up and a lay minister became the pattern. These sect groups stressed the fundamentals of the faith and depended on local resources and leadership. In other words, the religious backgrounds of the settlers and the physical environment of the frontier were the primary determinants of the type of religion that developed in the years that followed.

Local autonomous sect groups produced religious practices which helped sustain them and made life worth living in grim situations. Religion shaped their lives, but at the same time they shaped religion. As Jones (1972:110-111) points out, life on the frontier did not allow for an optimistic social gospel. Hard work did not bring sure reward. Their religion stressed

rewards in another life. The important thing was to get religion, to get saved. It was a realistic religion which fitted a realistic people.

Religion in Appalachia has not only involved those who are deprived, or only the fundamentalists of sectarian churches. On the contrary, institutionalized religion in Appalachia, although it might include a larger proportion of fundamentalists than churches elsewhere, has evolved and modernized probably as much as anywhere else in America. In helping segments of the population not feeling deprived and dislocated, it has adopted modernized religious practices which contribute to the integration of Appalachia into the larger society. As Jackson (1972), Graybeal (1961), and DeJong and Ford (1965) have all indicated, non-sectarian types of churches, mostly Methodist and Baptist, started becoming visibly more gesellschaft in form and more similar to those of the rest of the country as congregants' socioeconomic status levels increased and they became more knowledgeable about the larger society, particularly after World War I. During this period, institutionalized churches and non-fundamentalist beliefs, all over Appalachia, started gaining in popularity over sectarian churches and fundamentalist beliefs. During this same period, sectarian types of churches changed relatively little.

After World War II another reversal in trend, prevailing even to this day, became apparent as sectarianism and fundamentalism started growing again. In this era of rapid technological change, particularly during the last two decades, changes were taking place everywhere, including Appalachia, where interstates, air travel, highly efficient mass media, and social mobility became common occurrences. The rapidity of these changes seems to have a lot to do with the present religious peculiarities of rural Appalachia. Rural Appalachia has had more difficulties than other regions

in keeping up with increasing societal expectations stemming from the above mentioned changes.

Research (Photiadis and Maurer, 1972) indicated that, in contrast to the past, there has been higher alienation in the rural Appalachian community than in the city. Alienation and fundamentalism have been found (Feagin, 1964:3-13) to be related. Thus, it is speculated that fundamentalist religion, the most persistent social institution in rural Appalachia, has become stronger because it helps rural Appalachians alleviate anxieties produced by their inability to fulfill expectations created by the larger society which has become a more important reference group. The prevailing characteristics of Appalachian religion, fundamentalism and sectarianism, are types of theology and church known to be associated with deprivation. Therefore, the nature of certain social processes is helping support traditional theology and church forms that otherwise might disappear.

By making some parts more flexible on the one hand, and by retaining old fundamentalist forms and the rigidity of certain other parts on the other hand, religious institutions in Appalachia have contributed to the functioning of Appalachian society by facilitating the closer integration of some Appalachians into the larger society, and by reducing anxieties of many of Appalachia's relatively deprived and alienated population.

Summary and Conclusions

Major social institutions such as religion, family and economy are crystallized methods a society develops to meet important needs of its people. Appalachia, and its rural segment in particular, which in the past survived as a relatively autonomous social system, has been losing its relative autonomy, and in recent years has become more closely adjusted to, and dependent upon the larger society. Major social adjustments are

usually achieved through reorganization within the major social institutions and reorientation among themselves. Because the theme of the larger American society has been the attainment of a higher standard of living and higher incomes, the economic institution became the axis of reorientation of major social institutions in Appalachia. But due to the lack of means, in particular during the Fifties when the pressure for integration was most intense (this, for instance, was the time Appalachians were most sensitive about opinions of outsiders concerning their level of living), the process of adjustment, in particular economic, to the larger society encountered severe difficulties.

One major contribution of Appalachian religion during this process of institutional reorientation has been the maintenance, if not emphasis, of already existing flexibilities. These flexibilities, among other components, include church forms and doctrines varying widely in institutionalization, emotionalism, informality and intimacy among members. Emotionalism and intimacy have provided, and still do during this period of transition, the psychological support to many of those whose aspirations, in particular in terms of level of living, were raised, but for whom the means for fulfilling them were not accessible; and higher degrees of formal organization and institutionalization have provided opportunities for those who were not under stress, but needed assertion or stabilization of their social position on the basis of the larger society's standards.

In order to emphasize the importance of these flexibilities for rural change, we have made a comparison with the highly institutionalized and government controlled church of rural Greece. In this way it was hoped the adjustive flexibility of the Appalachian religious institution and the reasons for the success of this institution, compared to that of religious institutions in other Christian nations, could be demonstrated. This analysis has shown that the process of integration of the rural into the larger

societal system has been served probably better in this country, and rural Appalachia particularly, than in European countries and especially Greece. In Appalachia religious pluralism has provided the flexibility the religious institution has needed to support (primarily indirectly) the more direct contributions of other institutions (e.g. economic) to the integration of rural society into the larger society. Although religious pluralism has meant an increased rigidity within the individual and the sectarian church, at the same time it has displayed the flexibility needed for the rest of the Appalachian society and has served as a status maintenance and stabilization vehicle for those who have done well (economically) in society. In this case, both rigidity and flexibility have been necessary for the functional integration of rural society into the larger society.

Compared to Appalachia, religion in Greece has not differentiated enough to acquire the flexibility necessary for an efficient contribution to the institutional reorganization that integration into the larger society requires. Major reasons for the lack of differentiation have been the high degree of institutionalization and rigid nature of the Orthodox Church, and the public attitudes that not only accept but support it. Therefore, changes directly aiding integration of the rural into the larger society (e.g., social action programs) and adjustive changes that would aid integration indirectly by reducing discord or helping the alienated have been limited.

Institutionalized religion, as represented by the established churches of Appalachia and rural Greece, reflects the societies of which it is a part. One of its major factors is conservative -- to uphold social values and norms and help maintain a stable social structure. For those individuals whose needs are met by the social order, religion's role, particularly in Appalachia, is a supportive one and higher participation in church, therefore,

tends to be more positively correlated with the socially well-adjusted. For the socially maladjusted - the deprived, alienated and dispossessed - whose needs are not met by the established social institutions, it is another story. For this group, in Appalachia and rural Greece, institutionalized religion, like the social structure of which it is a part, becomes a part of the disenfranchisement.

In Appalachia, religion's indirect contribution to integration into the larger society, which in large part deals with the alleviation of anxieties produced by changes in other institutions, can easily explain the persistence of extreme sectarian fundamentalist groups in rural Appalachia, such as groups practicing snake handling, glossologia, and altered states of consciousness in general. What is even more notable, but readily justified on the basis of the theoretical framework we have used here, is that these groups persist, and in some cases are strengthened, in spite of the rapid increases in level of living and formal education in the region, factors which are normally negatively related to extreme sectarian fundamentalism.

Because members of sectarian churches are so involved in their church activities, which, as Robert Cole (1972:33-40) points out, are in large part communal worldly activities, we may suspect the sectarian religious groups of being eventual obstacles to the long term integration of Appalachian society with the larger social system. Membership in sectarian churches keeps people away from what some consider important worldly activities, such as community development programs that could eventually bring people into the mainstream of society. However, scholars such as Cole and Richard Ball (1971:69-79) still see this type of autonomous group behavior, contributing to a status of accommodation, as desirable at least at the present stage of development of the Appalachian society. If there were no accommodation

stage and the integration of Appalachia into the larger society were more complete, pressures on these groups for higher economic achievement and higher level of living would be much stronger. As we have indicated, at this stage of Appalachian transition, these pressures would be highly dysfunctional for the lower socioeconomic strata, simply because today's Appalachia cannot provide the means of fulrilling the desires these pressures would produce.

Furthermore, as research findings indicate, fundamentalism does not seem to be against progress. Gerard (1971:99-114) points out that the religious stationary poor keep up with such societal expectations as school attendance and work. Gerard's findings do not support the claim that sectarian fundamentalist religion keeps the Appalachian rural poor socioeconomically backward. In terms of attitudes toward progress, empirical evidence (Photiadis and Maurer, 1974) indicates that, when socioeconomic status is controlled, the relationship between fundamentalism and negative attitudes toward progress disappears. It seems that, in terms of resistance to change or progress, the significant difference between the fundamentalism of Appalachia and the emotional religions of the East often mentioned as handicaps to progress, must be in the nature of institutionalization and the embodiment of Eastern religion into a rigid stratification system. In this line, Gunnar Myrdal (1968:103-105) sees religion in South Asia as a "ritualized and stratified complex of highly emotional beliefs and valuations that give the sanction of sacredness, taboo, and inward ability to inherited institutional arrangements, modes of living and attitudes.

The implications of these findings in the light of the church's historic ministry of healing and reconciliation appear to be twofold: the importance of institutionalized religion in restoring the dispossessed to

fuller participation in society, and the value of religion in stabilizing societal change and minimizing dislocation and deprivation.

As societies continue undergoing rapid technological change and increases in complexity and confusion, bringing about dislocations in the lives of people, it appears the current trend toward conservatism and fundamentalism within the church will continue (Bibby and Brinkerhoff, 1974). Similarly, as opportunities for socioeconomic advancement develop, it appears that the church will have to play a role in meeting the spiritual needs of those who want to advance or stabilize their place in society.

In this light, the following questions can be asked to determine indications of trends in rural Christian religion: Can the institutional church develop programs capable of meeting the multiple religious needs of people who want (a) something in life to hold on to and give meaning, (b) enhance and stabilize their social position, and (c) live a spiritual life in accord with their value orientation? Should the existing pattern of religious pluralism in America, as exemplified by the case of Appalachia, be accepted, understood and legitimized as the total ministry to the religious needs of man? Should the churches in Greece and in other countries in Europe, and religious agencies of different dogmas, while retaining their old forms, modernize their organizations, the purpose of this modernization to be the satisfaction of increasing needs for alleviation of anxiety modern changes produce, and the satisfaction of intellectual needs of the now more educated villager?

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